

Internal Revenue Service

Department of the Treasury

Washington, DC 20224

Contact Person: [REDACTED]

ID # [REDACTED]

Telephone Number: [REDACTED]

In Reference to: OP:R:EO:T:2

Date:

FEB 22 1999

NO PROTEST RECEIVED  
Release copies to District  
Date [REDACTED]  
Signature [REDACTED]

Do: [REDACTED]  
EIN [REDACTED]

Dear Applicant:

This is in reply to your application for recognition of exemption under section 501(c)(5) of the Internal Revenue Code.

You submitted the following information with your application:

1. [REDACTED] of [REDACTED] as amended, through [REDACTED];
2. Your [REDACTED] articles as of [REDACTED];
3. Your Pension Rules as of [REDACTED] and
4. The collective bargaining agreement for the [REDACTED] full text in [REDACTED] with, excerpts relating to pension matter translated into [REDACTED]

You are the industry wide multi-employer pension plan for [REDACTED]. As noted in your Articles of Association and Rules the industry includes the metal working trade; the plumbing and fitting trade; the central heating trade; the electrical engineering trade; the body and car building trade and related trades; the trade in automobiles and the operation of car and motorcycle repairshops; the engine reconditioning trade; the trade in office machines; the gold and silver industry; the operation of bicycle repairshops; the modeling trade; and insulating trade; the diamond industry; the refrigeration industry; and any other trade or industry or part thereof that belongs to the metal industry as determined by the [REDACTED]. You have represented that you have been approved by the [REDACTED] as the exclusive pension fund for the industry.

Re: [REDACTED]

As presented in your memorandum of [REDACTED], in the [REDACTED] an industry-wide pension fund is normally created as a result of collective bargaining between the employer organizations and involved labor unions. Once the terms of this plan have been agreed to an application is made to [REDACTED]. This ministry will review the application and also consult with the [REDACTED] for approval under the pension law. Once approved by the ministry the plan is binding on all employees in the industry, both union and nonunion. This mandatory status can be withdrawn by the [REDACTED] for several reasons, including a finding that the fund is no longer sufficiently representative of the industry involved.

Your activities involve receiving contributions from employers and individual employees, investing these contributions and providing for the payment of pension and similar benefits. You provide both pension and death benefits. Early pensions are also available in special cases. You have represented that the provision of pension benefits is the primary activity you engage in. Both employers and employees contribute equal amounts to fund the pension.

You have represented that the policy making body for the [REDACTED] for all labor relations is called [REDACTED]. There are [REDACTED] members on the [REDACTED], [REDACTED] representing the employers and [REDACTED] the employees. In your memorandum of [REDACTED], you state that two of the members of your board of directors (presumably your Board of Governors) are on [REDACTED]. The members of your Board of Governors are appointed by the [REDACTED].

Your Board of Governors sets your policies. It has 10 members, 5 of whom have been appointed by the participating employer organizations and the other 5 are appointed by the three unions that are influential in the metal industry. Decisions by the Board of Governors requires an absolute majority and no action can be taken unless both the employers' representatives and the employees' representatives agree. Your Articles of Association indicate that the Board of Governors appoints a Board of Directors who are responsible for the day to day management of the affairs of the fund. There is also an [REDACTED] member advisory board half of who are appointed by the employer and half by the unions. Recommendations by the advisory board are not binding.

Section 501(c) (5) of the Code provides for the exemption of labor, agricultural, and horticultural organizations.

Re: [REDACTED]

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Section 1.501(c)(5)-1(a) of the Income Tax Regulations provides the organizations contemplated by section 501(c)(5) as entitled to exemption from income taxation are those which:

(1) have no net earnings inuring to the benefit of any member, and

(2) have as their objects the betterment of the conditions of those engaged in such pursuits, the improvement of the grade of their products, and the development of a higher degree of efficiency in their respective occupations.

Effective December 21, 1995, section 1.501(c)(5)-1(b)(1) of the regulations provides that, in general, an organization is not an organization described in section 501(c)(5) if its principal activity is to receive, hold, invest, disburse or otherwise manage funds associated with savings or investment plans or programs, including pension or other retirement savings plans or programs.

Section 1.501(c)(5)-1(b)(2) of the regulations indicates that certain dues-funded labor organizations are excepted by the provisions of 1.501(c)(5)-1(b)(1). These excepted organizations are those established and maintained by another labor organization, funded by membership dues and not by employer contribution, and not directly or indirectly established or maintained by employers or governmental units.

The accompanying Treasury Decision, T.D. 8726, 1997-34 I.R.B. 7, emphasizes that the new regulations clarify certain requirements of section 501(c)(5) of the Code and are not a change in the Service's position.

In Portland Co-operative Labor Temple Association, 39 B.T.A. 450 (1939) acq., 1939-1 (Part 1) C. B. 28, the petitioner owned an office building. The member labor unions and councils owned all the petitioner's capital stock, and its building was wholly devoted to their purposes and uses. The court indicated that the term labor organization for the purposes of section 501(c)(5) embraces the common acceptance of the term, including labor unions and councils and the groups which are ordinarily organized to protect and promote the interests of labor. The term labor organization calls for a liberal construction and is not a technical word nor a term of art.

Re: [REDACTED]

Rev. Rul. 62-17, 1962-1 C.B. 87, holds that the payment of employee-funded sick, accident, death or similar benefits by a labor organization, otherwise described in section 501(c)(5) of the Code does not preclude exemption under that subsection and is an appropriate activity for an exempt labor organization to engage in.

Rev. Rul. 67-7, 1967-1 C.B. 137, holds that an organization established and controlled by a labor union to provide strike and lockout benefits, on a mutual basis, to its members is exempt under section 501(c)(5) of the Code. The ruling concludes that strike benefits are directed to furthering a labor union's primary purpose of representing its members in matters of wages, hours of labor, working conditions, and economic benefits.

Rev. Rul. 76-420, 1976-2 C.B. 153, holds that an organization controlled by private individuals and not by a section 501(c)(5) labor organization, which contracted with members of the organization to pay a weekly income to those members in the event of a lawful strike called by the member's labor union, did not qualify for exemption under IRC 501(c)(5). The organization did not represent its members in matters relating to their employment, such as wages, hours of labor, working conditions, or economic benefits, and was not controlled by, or connected with, any of the labor organizations to which its members belonged.

Rev. Rul. 77-46, 1977-1 C.B. 147, in denying recognition of exemption to a collective bargained savings plan, sets forth the general test for establishing exemption under section 501(c)(5) of the Code. The test requires that in order for an organization to qualify as an exempt labor organization, it is necessary that its activities be those commonly or historically recognized as characteristic of labor organizations, or be closely related and necessary to accomplishing the principal purposes of exempt labor organizations. This organization did not qualify for recognition of exemption under section 501(c)(5) because it did not negotiate wages, hours, and working conditions or provide mutual benefits.

Morganbesser v. United States, 984 F. 2d 560 (2nd Cir. 1993); nonacq 1995-2 C.B. 2, held that a multiemployer pension trust operating pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement qualifies for recognition of exemption under section 501(c)(5) of the Code. Judge Miner, in dissenting from the majority opinion, recognized that under the Service's revenue rulings, connection to a traditional labor entity is necessary to support the granting of labor organization exemption. He continued to state that, "there can be no such connection where, as here, a pension plan is funded totally by employers, is not controlled by a labor union but by an independent board of trustees . . . and does not

Re: [REDACTED]

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support or supplement the union in any way." *Morganbesser*, 984 F. 2d at 565 (Miner, dissenting).

In Stichting Pensioenfonds Voor de Gezondheid, Geestelijke en Maatschappelijke Belangen v. United States of America (PGGM), 129 F.3d 195 (D.D.C. 1997) cert denied, 119 S. Ct. 43 (October 5, 1998) (hereinafter referred to as PGGM), the Court held that the fund was not exempt from federal income taxes as a labor organization described in section 501(c)(5) of the Code. This decision specifically found the analysis in Morganbesser v. United States, *supra*, unpersuasive and emphasized that an organization that "fulfills no representational role on behalf of labor nor is controlled by such as organization does not fall within the common understanding of the term." See also Tupper v. United States, 134 F.3d 444 (1st Cir. 1998). It should be noted that the pension fund in this case is [REDACTED] industry wide multi-employer pension plan.

Section 501(c)(5) of the Code, the regulations, revenue rulings, and court decisions, state that organizations are labor organizations if they are labor unions in the traditional sense or if their principal activity is engaging in employee representation. Other organizations can qualify as labor organizations if they engage in activities appropriate to labor organizations and are controlled by one or more labor organizations. See Portland Co-operative Labor Temple Association, and PGGM, *supra*. In order for an activity to be considered appropriate to a labor organization, that activity must be commonly or historically recognized as characteristic of labor organizations, or closely related to and necessary to accomplishing the principal purposes of exempt labor organizations. See Rev. Rul. 77-46, *supra*, (savings plan not considered commonly or historically recognized as a mutual labor organization activity). Where the activities are otherwise appropriate to a labor organization, but there is no significant connection to a labor organization, exemption is not available. See Rev. Rul. 76-420, *supra*.

The Internal Revenue Service position is that administering employer-provided pension benefits is not an appropriate activity for an exempt labor organization. Section 401 and other pension provisions of the Code contain stringent and detailed requirements for qualification for favorable tax treatment, including tax exemption for a pension trust. Allowing section 501(c)(5) exemption in these situations would effectively undermine the Congressional intent in enacting ERISA provisions of the Code. See PGGM, *supra*.

Re: [REDACTED]

The information you have submitted indicates that your primary purpose is to hold, administer and invest funds and pay out retirement and other benefits to your members. We recognize that benefits may be paid out in certain non-retirement situations such as lump sum death benefits. However, the provision of partially employer-funded pension benefits appears to be your primary activity. In addition you do not offer benefits on a mutual basis. You are not funded exclusively by dues paid by your employee/members and are not controlled by your members. The information submitted indicates that you have limited, if any, involvement in collective bargaining.

Where the principal activities are not those appropriate to a labor organization, the organization is not described in section 501(c)(5). Here the provision of partially employer funded pension benefits is not an appropriate labor organization activity. Therefore, you cannot qualify for recognition of exemption under section 501(c)(5) of the Code.

Your situation is distinguishable from that of Rev. Rul. 62-17, supra, in which the Service granted exempt labor organization status to a union that provided mutual, employee-funded health and welfare benefits with funds contributed by its members. Significantly, as noted in EGGM, supra, which dealt with a similar multi-employer industry pension system, there is not a sufficient nexus between you and a labor union. Nor are you controlled by a union. Further, you principally provide pension benefits as opposed to health and welfare benefits, and you do not provide mutual benefits, which are historically associated with unions and labor organizations. Finally, the funds contributed towards the payment of benefits are not provided exclusively by employees who have arranged with you or other related organizations to provide for the payment of retirement benefits. See and compare the strike funds described in Rev. Rul. 67-7, supra and 76-420, supra.

You do not represent employees in bargaining for benefits. Rather, your main activity appears to be ministerial, in that you perform the administrative function of paying pension benefits. Accordingly, your organization is similar to the savings plan described in Rev. Rul. 77-46, supra and the weekly income strike fund described in Rev. Rul. 76-420, supra. Neither your organization nor the savings plan described in Rev. Rul. 77-46 nor the strike fund described in described 76-420 accomplish the principal purposes of an exempt labor organization.

Re: [REDACTED]

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Therefore, we have concluded that you do not qualify for recognition of exemption under section 501(c)(5) of the Code. Unless, otherwise exempted you are subject to the withholding requirements set forth in section 1442 of the Code. See also section 894 with regard to the applicability of any treaty obligations effecting rates or taxability of United States source income.

You have the right to protest this ruling if you believe it is incorrect. To protest, you should submit a statement of your views, with a full explanation of your reasoning. This statement, signed by one of your officers, must be submitted within 30 days from the date of this letter. You also have a right to a conference in this office after your statement is submitted. You must request the conference, if you want one, when you file your protest statement. If you are to be represented by someone who is not one of your officers, that person will need to file a proper power of attorney and otherwise qualify under our Conference and Practices Requirements.

If we do not hear from you within 30 days, this ruling will become final and copies will be forwarded to your key District Director. Thereafter, any questions about your federal income tax status or the filing of tax returns should be addressed to that office.

When submitting additional letters with respect to this case to the Internal Revenue Service, you will expedite their receipt by placing the following symbols on the envelope: OP:E:EO:T:2 RJ, Room 6539. These symbols do not refer to your case but rather to its location.

Sincerely yours,

(signed) Garland A. Carter

Garland A. Carter  
Chief Exempt Organizations  
Technical Branch 2

cc: [REDACTED]

cc: [REDACTED]

OP:E:EO:T:2

OP:E:EO:T:2